

Message Text

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INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 2232

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, RP

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION ON "PARLIAMENTARY" FRONT

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

BEGIN SUMMARY

"PARLIAMENTARY" WARFARE NOW FLARING BETWEEN MACAPAGAL AND MARCOS. MACAPAGAL'S INITIATIVE IN CALLING FOR INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (INA) HAS GARNERED SUPPORT AMONG CON-CON DELEGATES AND FORMER CONGRESSMEN WHICH MACAPAGAL HOPING TO SOLIDIFY AT FEB 17 LUNCH--JUST PRIOR TO MARCOS' DEPARTURE FOR BALI SUMMIT. TO HEAD MACAPAGAL OFF, MARCOS HAS CONVENED FORMER POLITICIANS AT SEVERAL MEETINGS, INITIAL RESULTS OF WHICH STRONGLY PRO-INA AND CRITICAL OF CURRENT VAGUE ARRANGEMENTS ON SUCCESSION. MARCOS HAS NOW TAKEN FURTHER STEPS TO KILL MOVEMENT INCLUDING INSTANT JUSTICE DEPARTMENT RULING THAT SELF-CONVENTION OF INA ILLEGAL. ALTHOUGH WE DOUBT PUBLIC HAS ANY INTEREST IN CURRENT WARFARE OR THAT POLITICIANS LIKELY TRY PRECIPITATE ACTION WITH MARCOS OUT OF COUNTRY, MARCOS CLEARLY UNWILLING TO TAKE ANY CHANCES ABOUT POSSIBLE THREAT TO HIS CONTINUED RULE.

END SUMMARY.

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1. FORMER CON-CON DELEGATE LUIS CATUBIG PRO-

VIDED EMBASSY FEB 13 WITH ACCOUNT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ON "PARLIAMENTARY" FRONT FOLLOWING PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL'S LETTER TO PHILCONSA PRESIDENT LIM URGING CONVENING INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. CATUBIG, OLD EMBASSY FRIEND AND FORMER CON-CON DELEGATE, HAS PARTICIPATED IN MUCH OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS.

2. SHORTLY AFTER MACAPAGAL'S LETTER WAS CIRCULATED, NUMBER OF HIS SUPPORTERS DISTRIBUTED A PETITION CALLING FOR CONVENING OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. A FAIRLY LARGE NUMBER OF CON-CON DELEGATES SIGNED THE PETITION. ABOUT SAME TIME, FORMER PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL INVITED ALL CON-CON DELEGATES TO HIS HOUSE ON FEB 17, FOR SO-CALLED THANKSGIVING DAY LUNCH.

3. PRESIDENT MARCOS, ALARMED AT MOMENTUM DEVELOPING BEHIND MACAPAGAL'S MOVE AND DISTURBED AT CATALYTIC INITIATIVE OF MACAPAGAL LUNCH FOR CON-CON DELEGATES ONLY SHORTLY BEFORE HE WAS TO LEAVE COUNTRY FOR SUMMIT CONFERENCE IN BALI, LAUNCHED A COUNTER CAMPAIGN. IT BEGAN WITH A MEETING OF CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AT MALACANANG FEB 5 (VILLAREAL, PABLO ROMAN, AND OTHERS) AND WAS FOLLOWED BY A GATHERING OF CON-CON DELEGATE, SPORTS UNDERSECRETARY AND, WE UNDERSTAND, NOW PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT FOR GENERAL GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS) ON FEB 7. THAT MEETING WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A GATHERING OF CONGRESSMEN (LOWER HOUSE) FEB 14.

4. AT MEETINGS ON FEB 5 AND 7, MOST CONGRESSMEN AND CON-CON DELEGATES PASSIONATELY ARGUED FOR CALLING INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. TWO PRINCIPAL ARGUMENTS WERE: A) "FACT" THAT PHILIPPINES WAS ONLY NATION IN WORLD WITHOUT A LEGISLATIVE BODY, AND B) THAT A LEGISLATIVE BODY WAS NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH SUCCESSION SINCE NO ONE WOULD HONOR PRESIDENT'S MYSTERIOUS SUCCESSION DECREE. PRESIDENT COUNTERED WITH ARGUMENT THAT BITTERNESS AND DISSENSION REFLECTED IN COMMENTS AT THESE MEETINGS WERE PRECISELY THE DIVISIVENESS WHICH HE WISHED TO AVOID EXPOSING COUNTRY TO IN THESE CRITICAL TIMES. THE PEOPLE HAD ALREADY

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SPOKEN AGAINST CONVENING AN INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THROUGH THE REFERENDUM, BUT IF NECESSARY HE WOULD CALL ANOTHER REFERENDUM TO DECIDE MATTER. PRESIDENT AND HIS SUPPORTERS IN DISTINCT MINORITY. TO INJECT "HUMOR" INTO OTHERWISE TENSE MEETING FEB 7, DUAVIT SUGGESTED THAT IF PRESIDENT DID NOT CONVENE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, MATTER OF SUCCESSION WOULD HAVE TO BE DETERMINED BETWEEN BONG BONG MARCOS AND

DESCENDANTS OF PRESENT CON-CON DELEGATES.

5. PRESSING HOME COUNTER OFFENSIVE, PRESIDENT HAS ENCOURAGED HIS SUPPORTERS TO CIRCULATE COUNTER PETITION OPPOSING CONVENING OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE HAS BEGUN SUCCESSFULLY PRESSURING CON-CON MEMBERS AGAINST ATTENDING MACAPAGAL'S LUNCH. HE HAS STARTED OFFERING APPOINTMENTS AS JUDGES AND OTHER KINDS OF OFFICIALS. TOPPING COUNTER OFFENSIVE, ACTING JUSTICE SECRETARY MACARAIG ISSUED OPINION FEB 12 WHICH HAS BEEN COMMUNICATED TO ALL CON-CON DELEGATES AND FORMER CONGRESSMEN ADVISING THAT CONVENING OF THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE WOULD BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND SUBJECT TO PROSECUTION. IMMIGRATION COMMISSIONER REYES IS CIRCULATING RUMOR THAT MACAPAGAL TAKING INITIATIVE WITH "AMERICAN" BACKING.

6. COMMENT: PARLIAMENTARY WARFARE NOW UNDERWAY IS TEMPEST IN TEAPOT IN TERMS OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN MACAPAGAL AS OPPOSITION LEADER OR IN CONVENING OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. INTENSITY OF CON-CON DELEGATE AND CONGRESSIONAL FEELING ABOUT INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND, PARTICULARLY, OVER MOST SENSITIVE AREA OF SUCCESSION, HOWEVER, MAY HAVE CAUGHT PRESIDENT BY SURPRISE. IN CONTEXT OF VARIOUS MEASURES CURRENTLY BEING TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT AGAINST OTHER OPPOSITIONISTS (CHURCH, LABOR, STUDENTS), PRESIDENT PROBABLY FEELS UNDER PRESSURE TO LAY ISSUE TO REST BEFORE DEPARTING PHILIPPINES FOR SUMMIT CONFERENCE. SEIZURE OF POWER BY FORMER POLITICIANS OR EVEN SELF-CONVENTION OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEEMS REMOTE TO US, BUT
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PRESIDENTIAL TRAVELS ABROAD HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CAREFULLY CIRCUMSCRIBED PRECISELY BECAUSE OF TWIN ISSUES OF STABILITY AND SUCCESSION. PRESIDENT CLEARLY TAKING NO CHANCES.
SULLIVAN

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